



Memorandum

TO: Historic Landmarks Commission

FROM: Courtney Damkroger
Historic Preservation Officer

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED CITY
LANDMARK DESIGNATION
FOR THE 5 SPOT
869 SOUTH FIRST STREET**

DATE: August 7, 2002

APPROVED:

DATE:

BACKGROUND

In February 2000 the 5 Spot located at 869 South First Street was evaluated in an Historic Report. The Historic Report (attached) stated that the building exceeded the qualification threshold for City Landmark status (rating a 95.8), but due to the age limitation for the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historic Resources would not yet qualify for these designations. Using the research documented in the Historic Report, building owner David G. Silva recently submitted an application for Historic Landmark designation of the 5 Spot.

The subject site is currently zoned LI, Light Industrial, and designated General Commercial on the General Plan Land Use and Transportation Diagram.

ANALYSIS

The 5 Spot is a one-story drive-in restaurant building located at the corner South First and Sutter streets. It's style is referred to as "Coffee Shop Modern." The first portion of the building was constructed in 1931 with additions and canopies added in 1951 and 1955. No designer or architect is associated with the building, but the additions were constructed by O.W. Meyer. The building, interior and its site maintain a high level of integrity to the 1950s configuration of the drive-in restaurant.

The building is constructed of brick and is a simple rectangle plan with a flat roof. The storefront consists of two sets of tripartite aluminum framed fixed glass windows set above a wainscot of painted random broken coursed ashlar stonework. The aluminum framed glass door entry is centrally located between two brick columns. The Historic Report notes that the façade appears to have been remodeled in the 1950s at the time of the additions. The canopy, located at the north and west sides of the building, is a thin, flat-roof structure composed of steel ribbed channel decking with exposed channels. Exposed and tapered steel I-beams provide the structural support. The canopy line wraps the front of the building creating a projecting eave over the front façade. A neon-wrapped ice cream cone still rises above the canopy on the north side. The "5 Spot Coffee Shop" sign is intact and sited prominently at the corner of the lot. The circulation



system appears to be relatively intact—allowing auto access under the canopies which, historically, provided the carhops access to vehicles.

The alterations to the 5 Spot reflect the 1950s era. The Coffee Shop Modern style of the 5 Spot is a rare remaining example of a style popular in Southern California from the 1930s through the 1950s, representing a car-oriented culture. It is the early association of this site with this cultural pattern that is significant at the local City Landmark level.

The Spivey brothers acquired the restaurant in 1945 and oversaw the 1950s changes to the building. The Spiveys opened other restaurants in San Jose, Los Gatos and Campbell during this period at first calling them 5 Spot and later changing their names to Spivey's. Other members of the Spivey family became involved in the business as well. By the 1960s restaurants were added in Mountain View, Santa Cruz, and Cupertino, although the 5 Spot on South First Street was the first Spivey restaurant. The Spivey's were associated with this site until 1975.

The development of the drive-in restaurant in San Jose began in the 1930s and lasted into the 1960s. The start of this popular restaurant style was the Pig Stand near Dallas, Texas in 1921. The style started in Los Angeles with the Country Inn in 1922 and carhop restaurants spread around the state. A&W Root Beer developed one of the more popular chains. In the 1930s parking lots began to take on a more organized orientation. The 5 Spot was one of a number of drive-in restaurants in the valley known for carhops who wore roller-skates and were associated with "dragging the main". While the Spivey's did not acquire the building until 1945, Aloyious Ott, the previous owner, had operated a carhop style restaurant at the site.

Based on the historic report, the 5 Spot at 896 South First Street obtained a rating of 95.8 based on the City of San Jose evaluation criteria, which indicates its eligibility for Historic Landmark status.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning staff recommends that the Historic Landmarks Commission forward a recommendation to the City Council to initiate proceedings to designate the 5 Spot at 896 South First Street as an Historic Landmark.

Courtney Damkroger
Historic Preservation Officer

Attachment

- Historic report including City of San Jose Evaluation Sheet and DPR form